

Dear Members of the Higher Education Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Joseph Patrick Veloso, and I am a member of the organization CT Students for a DREAM. I stand in support of the following two bills. House Bill 6844 AN ACT CONCERNING IN-STATE TUITION ELIGIBILITY which would lower the in-state residency requirement for undocumented students from four years to 2 years. AND House Bill 6845 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION, part of which would open up access to some financial aid for undocumented students.

I support legislation that takes vital steps towards education equality by making higher education more accessible for undocumented students, including but not limited to, opening access to institutional and state financial aid to undocumented students, broadening the number of students eligible for in state tuition, lowering of the in-state residency requirement for undocumented students, and creation of an alternative to the FAFSA that allows undocumented students to get fair and equal access to financial aid.

I was born in the United States and I have lived my entire life in Windsor Locks, Connecticut. I am Filipino-American and grew up in a very traditional Filipino household. From my parents I was taught the significance of higher education for personal success. I grew up learning education can dictate one's social mobility in this society. For example, the chances of getting a good well paying job can be based on whether you have a Bachelors degree versus an Associate's degree or Doctorate degree versus a Masters degree. The type of degree you have attained from college or grad school, aside personal skills and experience, is crucial to acquiring a good job nowadays. This last Spring 2014, I graduated with Bachelors of Science in Public Health. Alongside my degree I left college with a little over 20k of loans. Despite the amount of money I owe, I was simply happy to have a degree to further my education and my work experience. The importance of a high education degree resonated with me so much that it saddens me to see money being the determining factor if a student will receive education or will not receive education. I became a member of CT Students for a DREAM to fight these inequalities of our education system. It is unfortunate our education system is second most expensive country in the world, second to Australia. With this fact being a living reality, everyone, including the undocumented students, should be entitled to financial support to receive higher education. This is why I am in support of HB 6844 and HB 6845.

These bills are a way to meaningfully address the educational equality achievement gap in Connecticut. Our legislature has adopted a goal of closing this achievement gap and of fostering progress among low-income and limited English-proficient students. These bills would be a step in that direction. I support HB 6844 and HB 6845 and hope the committee will do the same. We cannot afford to sit idly by and do nothing about the lack of access to higher education for all Connecticut students. Each year, hundreds of talented undocumented students graduate from Connecticut high schools with hopes of college attendance. These students cannot wait any longer; we must do what we can right now to help them achieve their dreams.

Thank you,  
Joseph Patrick Veloso